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## The Banana Republic of America: Democracy Be Damned

By Richard W. Behan  
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We are witnessing a presidential election of epic farce. The Republican Party nominates the caricature of a tinpot dictator. The Democratic National Committee is a caricature too, of comic opera: exposed in collusion with a favored candidate it anoints a felon, shown to be such but unindicted.

We are witnessing the collapse of democratic presidential politics. It is a derelict process, complex, absurdly long, insanely expensive, tedious, inconsistent and now chaotic.

Professional football is a public extravaganza, its six-month season culminating in the tangible climax of the Superbowl. It is dwarfed in spectacle however by the same suspense and dramatic finale of presidential politics—which also displays a sports-fan mentality but lasts three times as long. The Republican fans and the Democratic fans hold one another in mutual contempt, their shared citizenship and sense of community overcome by righteous dedication to their cherished teams.

Civil discourse is impossible between the parties, and within them as well. Trump fans clash violently with Cruz fans, Clinton fans disdain Sanders fans with vehemence. Reasoned discussion and debate are no more likely than what you'd see at a soccer riot.

No one benefits from the epic farce except the nation's advertising agencies and the mass media, reaping billions in creating and disseminating episode-response campaign

advertisements, their span of relevance measured in hours. Everyone else suffers: the potential candidates tasked with raising and spending the billions and the general public made to endure a year and a half of inane spectacle.

We wind up with a tinpot dictator and a woman shown to be felonious—and democracy has fled.

Nearly three-quarters of Republican convention delegates are chosen by some variation of the winner-take-all feature, and it is manifestly undemocratic. When the candidate with even slightly more votes in a primary is allocated all the delegates, the vote is effectively declared unanimous. The popularity of the winner is greatly but unjustly exaggerated. A few wins in the early states steamrolls the fortunate candidate to victories in the states to follow, and the effect is cumulative.

The Democratic Party does better in this regard, relying on proportional allocation. But in this election cycle, the party's suppression of democracy mimics a banana republic's. The DNC and the Clinton campaign were joined at the hip from the beginning, in stark violation of party rules prohibiting favoritism during the primaries. The DNC withheld the Party's voter database from the Sanders campaign, denying him access to potential campaign contributors. It programmed only six debates, half the Republicans' number, and three were scheduled on weekends to minimize the viewing audience. Even before Ms. Clinton had a single declared opponent 400 superdelegates were presented as committed votes, unjustly exaggerating her popularity, and the practice continued in state after state. Finally the Associated Press declared Ms. Clinton to be the "presumptive nominee" the night before California and five other states held their primaries. 5% of the Iowa caucuses were never counted. In Brooklyn, New York, Mr. Sanders' home town, 125,000 voters were purged from the rolls. Arizona voters waited 3 to 4 hours to vote—in pro-Sanders precincts. In Nevada 58 Sanders delegates to the state convention were summarily disqualified. California was called for Clinton when her lead reached 400,000 votes—with 2.5 million provisional ballots uncounted. Bill Clinton and Attorney General Lynch visited on the tarmac in Phoenix, after which she announced she would accept whatever decision the FBI might render regarding Ms. Clinton's potential indictment. The next day FBI Director Comey described Ms. Clinton's felonies in detail but chose not to indict for lack of precedent. Attorney General Lynch accepted the decision. 20,000 DNC emails came to light documenting the collusion between DNC and its preferred candidate, whereupon the head of the party Ms. Wasserman-Schultz resigned. In a heartbeat Ms. Clinton praised her service to the Democratic Party and made her the honorary chair of the Clinton campaign.

If we are to have a shred of confidence in our presidential elections, the behavior this time of both political parties cannot be sustained. We need systemic change to retrieve and retain the democracy so loudly proclaimed by both parties and so little displayed by either. But that must wait; today we face the tinpot dictator and the felonious woman.

The Republicans have named their nominee. The Democrats not quite yet, but they can serve up a far more palatable nominee if they choose—with superdelegate votes. The superdelegate system is profoundly undemocratic and in great need of dismantling, but a desperate time calls for the desperate measure of calling it into service.

Superdelegates are deemed to be the seasoned statesmen and stateswomen of the Democratic Party, assigned to identify the candidate most likely to succeed and best suited to promoting the nation's welfare.

Most of the superdelegates have endorsed Hillary Clinton, but endorsement is not formal commitment under party rules. The superdelegates are committed only when they cast their ballots, and this year their votes will determine the nominee: neither candidate has yet acquired the necessary 2,383 votes for nomination.

Now, with the collusion between Ms. Clinton and the DNC fully exposed, the statesmanship of the superdelegates will be tested—and displayed to the American people.

Bernie Sanders' campaign was impeccably democratic, calling for government to serve all the people, not just the corporations and the wealthy. He accepted not a penny of corporate or Superpac money. He colluded with no one, never gamed the system, and was consciously handicapped both by his party and the mass media. But he accumulated almost as many popular votes as Ms. Clinton and 82% of her delegate count, and in poll after poll was shown far more likely to defeat Donald Trump.

At this writing Ms. Clinton is trailing Mr. Trump.

When the superdelegate votes are tallied at the Democratic convention, we will witness either statesmanship or a corrupted party unworthy of anyone's support.